



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING
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December 16, 2008

Dear Licensed Child Care Provider,

As you may know, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) began holding quarterly “child care conversations” with licensed providers this fall as a way to strengthen our relationship with you and focus together on solutions for improving the child care system in Washington. We held one meeting in Lacey in September and another in Seattle on Dec. 6. Two more meetings were scheduled for 2009.

At DEL, we feel strongly that open communication between all of us who care about children is a key to making sure that we’re doing our best, together, to help children be safe, healthy and gain a love of learning that they take into school and life. The “child care conversations” were just one of the ways DEL hoped to get great new ideas and to get to know you better at the local level so our shared work really benefits families. However, after holding the first two meetings, I have decided to stop them for now. The new DEL director will be able to reevaluate their effectiveness when he or she is appointed in 2009.

We began these meetings because we wanted to reach out in good faith to licensed providers—to work together respectfully to find effective solutions in our child care licensing work. Unfortunately, the first two meetings were neither respectful nor particularly effective. I’ve heard reports from both DEL staff and licensed providers that people who attended spoke disrespectfully to DEL staff and to one another, and former providers came forward to rehash actions like revocations that were decided upon in the past. Arguments broke out between the people at the last meeting, despite my staff’s best efforts to make it a positive and worthwhile experience; some people were even swearing – using language inappropriate for meetings and certainly not helpful in building positive relationships.

This was not the point of the meetings. I recognize that this behavior is not at all representative of the licensed child care providers in this state; however, the voices of a few have drowned out the voices of many. DEL has received many apology notes from those of you who attended these meetings, letting us know how sorry you were about the actions of others.

Since the creation of DEL it has been a “new day,” one where we’ve tried hard to make opportunities that show how much we value respectful and effective communication with providers. I am so very grateful to the licensed providers who sent notes after the meetings

thanking DEL staff for listening and remaining professional, and for providing an opportunity for open conversation.

I must stop these meetings for now as I cannot approve the time, energy and expense involved in forums that haven't created the changes we hoped for.

DEL will certainly continue communicating with licensed providers in many ways:

- Directly with DEL licensors
- Through our Web site and the DEL News listserv
- Through center director meetings, family child care association meetings, and other local meetings
- Through a new child care provider handbook, which will come out early next year, and other materials
- Through the DEL licensing quality improvement feedback e-mail: qualityimprovement@del.wa.gov

Again, thanks so much to all of you who attended the first two meetings so that relationships could be strengthened. We appreciated your willingness to have respectful dialogue and were grateful for your notes that followed the two meetings. A new DEL director may wish to launch these in the future but at this time, I am canceling the two planned for meetings in 2009.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jone".

Jone Bosworth
Director